

AMENDMENT TO CLAIMS

1, 2, 3 (canceled)

4 (currently amended). The DC/AC converter as claimed in claim 6 ~~[[3]]~~, characterized in that the ~~switch elements~~ switches and the control circuit are incorporated into a single semiconductor chip.

5 (currently amended). The DC/AC converter as claimed in claim 6 ~~[[1]]~~, characterized in that the control circuit is adapted to control the effective output voltage through pulse width modulation.

6 (new). In a DC/AC converter for supplying a three level voltage to a gas discharge lamp, said converter including a first switch coupled in series with a second switch, a third switch coupled in series with a fourth switch and a junction between said second switch and said third switch, wherein said junction is a first output terminal, said converter further including a second output terminal, wherein said first output terminal and said second output terminal can be coupled to said lamp; the improvement comprising:

a control circuit coupled at least to said second switch and to said third switch for causing said second switch and said third switch to conduct alternately with each of said second switch and said third switch turning on before the other of said second switch and said third switch turns off to produce intervals of simultaneous conduction, thereby preventing said lamp from floating or from flickering during operation.

7 (new). The DC/AC converter as set forth in claim 6 wherein the control circuit causes said third switch to conduct before the second switch stops conducting and causes the third switch to stop conducting after the second switch starts conducting.

8 (new). The DC/AC converter as set forth in claim 7 wherein said control circuit causes said second switch to conduct before the third switch stops conducting and

causes the second switch to stop conducting after the third switch starts conducting.

9 (new). A method for operating the series switches in a three level voltage supply having four switches in series, said method comprising the steps of:

- causing the middle switches to conduct alternately; and
- causing each of said middle switches to conduct before the other of said middle switches stops conducting to produce intervals of simultaneous conduction.